

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 400 016

JC 960 615

AUTHOR Isbell, Tom; And Others
TITLE As Worlds Collide: A Central Arizona College Learning Community.
INSTITUTION Central Arizona Coll., Coolidge.
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 13p.; Document prepared as an application for the 1996 David Pierce Work Force Leadership Awards, Section IV: Learner Focused Teaching Leadership.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Cooperative Learning; Course Descriptions; Course Evaluation; *Cultural Awareness; *Curriculum Design; Instructional Innovation; Learning Activities; *Outcomes of Education; *Program Effectiveness; Seminars; Student Characteristics; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS Central Arizona College; *Learning Communities

ABSTRACT

In fall 1995, a team of three instructors at Central Arizona College offered "As Worlds Collide," a 9-credit learning community combining insights and methodologies from history, social psychology, and communication studies to explore questions of culture and community. The team sought to determine if such a learning community could succeed in a rural community college serving a population of varied students and if it provided sufficient rewards to students and faculty. Forty-seven self-selected students enrolled in the course, which met 2 days a week in 5-hour sessions. Although seminars were the most common form of learner-active instruction used, teams of six or seven students were occasionally formed to present instruction to the class. A "community room" was equipped for the class with advance projection and electronic presentation equipment, while students created their own video and audio materials. Assessment was achieved through the use of a portfolio, in which students accumulated class notes, film response sheets, and seminar discussions. Learning outcomes determined by the team and a student services specialist included the following: (1) the class comfort level allowed for learning; (2) writing skills improved through class discussion; (3) critical thinking improved; and (4) writing skills improved through the use of journals and portfolios. Data on learning community participants at the college are attached. (HAA)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *



A Central Arizona College Learning Community

Faculty

- Tom Isbell
- Pat McClellan
- Steve Ornelas

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OEI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Ornelas

T. Isbell

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Introduction

WHAT IS A LEARNING COMMUNITY?

A learning community is a multiple credit program in which students join with a group of their peers and a faculty team for a semester of interdisciplinary study. Students and faculty become an interactive community of learners exploring a selected theme in depth, reading and discussing primary sources on the subject. Two questions were posed as Central Arizona College chose to pursue learning communities as a potential teaching approach:

- ❖ “Can a learning community succeed in a rural community college serving a population of varied ages, ethnicities, and academic preparedness?”
- ❖ “Does a learning community provide sufficient rewards to students and faculty to justify the expense, time, and scheduling challenges?”

Central Arizona College decided to find out. The resulting experiment became a learning experience for the students, the faculty team, the administration, and the campus at large

Learner-Active Instruction

During the Fall of 1995 a team of three instructors offered a nine credit learning community to self-selecting students at Central Arizona College. The course, entitled "As Worlds Collide," combined insights and methodologies from the disciplines of history, social psychology, and communication studies to explore questions of culture and community. What is culture? How is culture maintained and transmitted? What happens when cultures conflict? Is there a universal pattern to be discerned? Forty seven students enrolled in the course which met twice a week from 8:00 am until 1:15 p.m. Mornings included a variety of activities: work teams developed and delivered informational presentations to the class, guest lecturers or symposium participants brought specialized insights to topics under consideration, there was time in the morning for viewing full-length films without interruption, and there was the occasional lecture. Afternoons were devoted to student seminars: meeting in groups of fifteen, students discussing reading assignments. Instructors were there, but not as leaders or even active participants. Seminar discussions were the most consistent incident of learner-active instruction. During the course of the semester, each seminar group developed into a sophisticated self-guided learning team.

Interpersonal conflicts occurred within the teams; political conflicts occurred around the teams. Students were actively involved in approaching and resolving these conflicts.

Cooperative Learning

Although seminars were the most consistent occasion of learner-active instruction, teams of six or seven students were occasionally formed to present instruction to the class. One such presentation explored the customs and character of a selected ethnicity. Another presented the results of gathering examples of contemporary propaganda. A third constructed and offered an original propaganda campaign. Such presentations required a sustained group effort over an extended period of time. In each case issues of teamwork were considered. This year, in the second offering of this experience, group process journals will require an even more systematic attention to issues of team leadership, conflict resolutions, and problem-solving techniques.

Classroom Research

This Learning Community had the advantage of a collaborative working relationship with a student services specialist who was researching demographic data related to several Learning Communities active at CAC. The results (including two separate learning communities) serve as helpful tools in future curriculum planning (see Attachments A & B)

Additionally, the collaborating researcher has done extensive observations in the Learning Community setting and has assisted faculty by developing useful tools to assess students values and attitudes (see Attachment C).

Another research related activity is the interest of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse in the Project. Inclusion in that database helps "spread the word" about the value of this approach and the specifics of this project (see Attachment D).

Use of Technology

The class spent mornings in the campus "community room" which is equipped with appropriate technology. Students as well as instructors made extensive use of advance projection equipment. An electronic "presenter table" was in the room at all times so students became comfortable with its use and explored its potentials. Students also created their own video and audio tape recordings to include in their presentations.

Student Assessment

Assessment was achieved through the use of a portfolio. In that portfolio each student accumulated class notes, film response sheets, and seminar discussions. At three times during the semester students were required to write a synthesis paper in which they developed an original observation which came from or applied to the continuing dialogue that was the course. It was in the synthesis papers that the students' critical thinking skills were most challenged.

Several learning outcomes were noted by faculty and the student services specialist conducting a related research project:

- Class comfort level allows for learning.
- Writing skills improve through class discussion (open forum).
- The word community encourages the establishment of support systems, bonding occurs at all levels.
- Critical thinking improves.
- Social skills improve through group activities.
- Knowledge and skills transfer to other classes.
- Academic development focuses not on volume but quality of outside class assignments.
- Student recognizes his/her own improvement in academic performance
- Free speech/awareness of others' values, culture and beliefs is developed
- A sense of organization and the interrelatedness of learning is developed
- Writing skills improve through the use personal journals and portfolios

Organizational and Community Leadership

As a consequence of this experiment in teaching, the three teachers involved have offered a district-wide weekend retreat to report on their findings and encourage their colleagues to develop additional learning communities and cooperative learning activities. Additionally, the team presented their experience to Arizona's first state-wide conference for the promotion of

cooperative learning. Finally, they went to Austin, Texas, to report their findings to National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD).

Conclusion

The following comments from students indicate the value of this learner-active, critical thinking, problem solving approach to teaching and learning:

- "Tangible faculty/student relationship."
- "Learning community is the "spirit of education" through discussion and debate "
- "Intimate climate of the community "
- "Variety of teaching strategies."
- "Relaxed atmosphere."
- "Freedom of speech - invited to challenge instructor."
- "Understanding of students' needs concerning assignments, etc."
- "Recognition of the "total" student, i e., personal, social, emotional needs which may hinder academic development."
- "Applicability of a discipline's history and theory."
- "I felt like I was packing for a trip, and that I would be gone quite a long time."

One students' more lengthly synopsis communicates the breadth and depth of this experience for her as an individual:

"What is a "Learning Community?" A "Learning Community" is a course in which three disciplines are intermingled with each other and taught together. They offer the student an opportunity to get involved with different perspectives, cultural diversity and to develop intensive critical thinking. My History Professor's enthusiasm for this course sparked my interest. I decided on this course because of it's unique structure. Entitled "As Worlds Collide," the disciplines were Social-Psychology, Communications, and History.

The course work entailed free writing, films with write-ups, lectures, eight books with assigned readings, several group presentations, a group war/tactical game, and synthesis papers on what we were learning at various points during the course.

The instructor's for this course were dynamic, highly motivated, and managed to bring the subject matter together from different disciplines, with diversity and intensive critical thinking. In the morning session we had lectures, films, and guest speakers. In the afternoon session we broke up into three smaller groups and discussed our reading and writing assignments. These were free flowing discussions about our reading, what we got from it or what we didn't understand or agree with. These discussion groups gave us a unique perspective and intense critical thinking on a variety of subjects we studied.

One was a ten move strategic game. Each group, who was assigned a country, organized its own diplomatic team, and began negotiating for world dominance. The metamorphosis that took place over the weeks playing this game was fascinating from a psychological, political, and communications stand point. We used what we learned from the lectures, films, speakers, readings, and most importantly from each other.

Another group project was done on ethnicity. Each groups was given a nationality. We were instructed "to dig into the culture and to come up smelling like the people we were studying." We were to give you a true "feel" for the culture of the people we were representing. We literally immersed ourselves in another culture and shared our learning experiences with the entire class. This was invaluable in learning cultural diversity from the ground up.

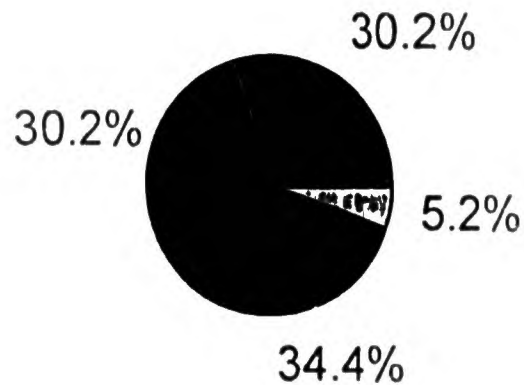
As the weeks passed we found ourselves growing closer as individuals. Rarely if ever do you get that involved with your fellow classmates in college. You go to lectures, labs, and take tests. We got together in and outside of class, to work in more detail on our projects. We all learned something about each other, people in general, and about society's views, controls and constraints on us as individuals.

By the end we all wanted the course to continue another semester; we still had more to learn and share. Any student who takes a Learning Community course is getting so much more out of the course than he ever could have just going to a lecture and lab.

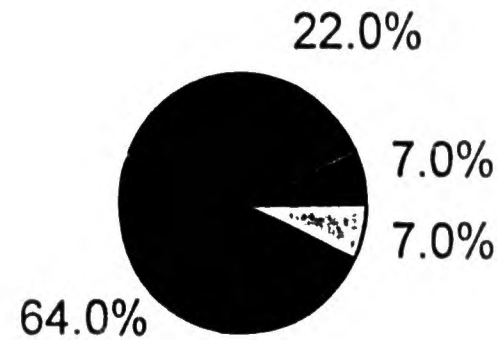
I feel I owe a lot to the three professors who dedicated their time and energy into making this course such a success. I am glad that my college had the foresight to try this program."

Central Arizona College Learning Communities

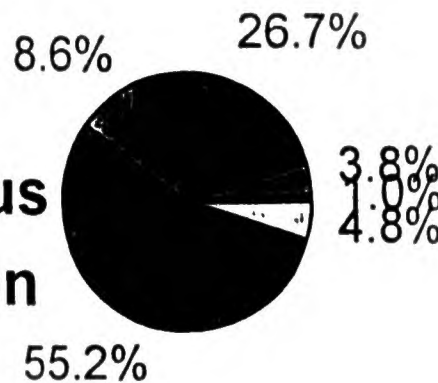
Games People Play



Worlds Collide

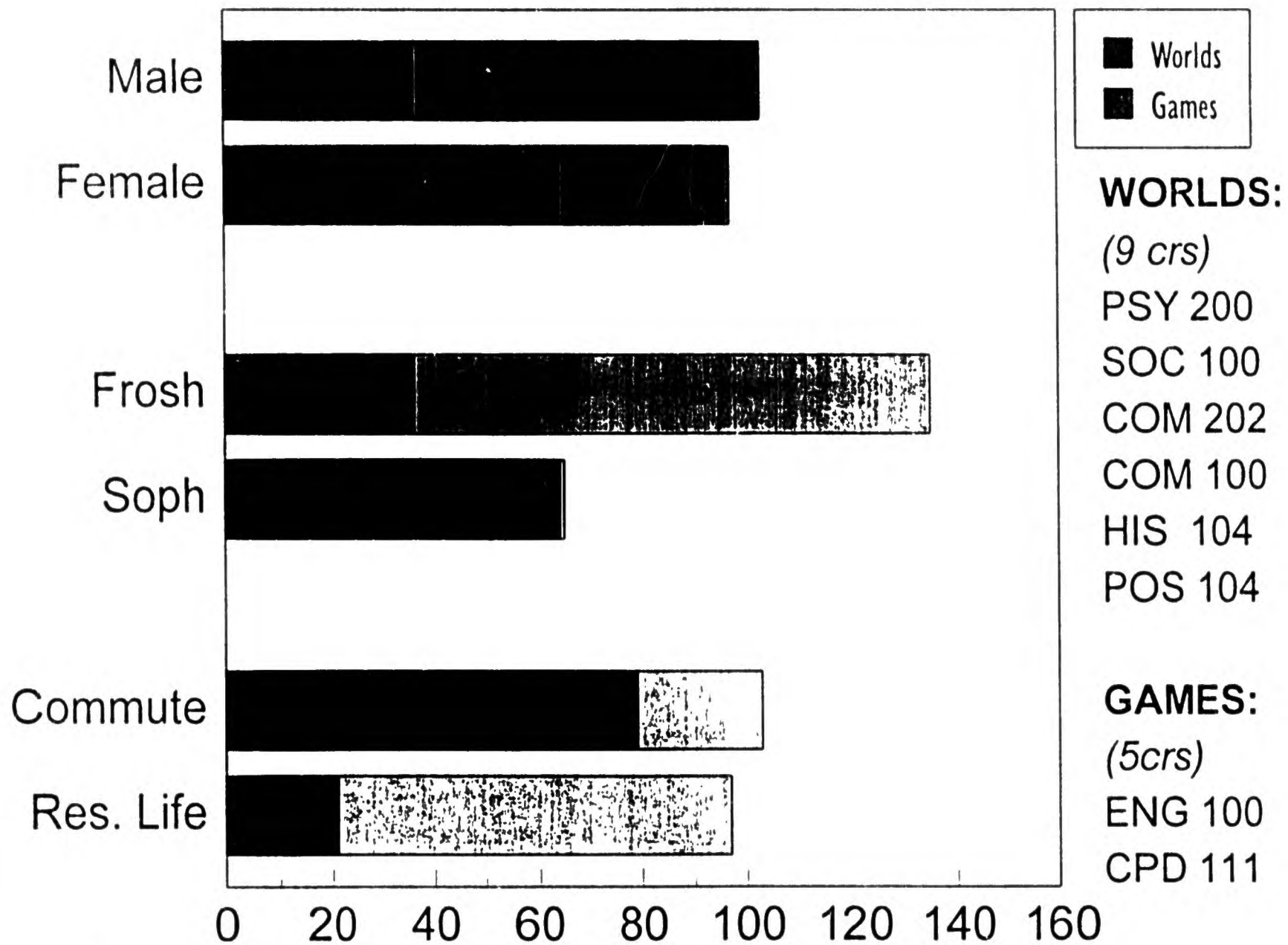


Signal Peak Campus Population



Asian
 Black
 Hispanic
 Nat. Am
 Caucasian
 Other

Central Arizona College Learning Communities



STUDENT VALUES & ATTITUDES SURVEY

Survey Questions Asked		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Don't know (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Total	Percent
1.	I dislike competition							
2.	I have a strong interest in learning							
3.	I enjoy working with others							
4.	I tend to achieve my goals							
5.	I am satisfied with myself							
6.	I have a negative attitude towards school							
7.	I'm working as hard as I should be							
8.	I tend to put off completing things							
9.	I learn a lot from others							
10.	College has lived up to my expectations							
11.	I get sufficient attention from faculty							
12.	My teachers give me lots of feedback							
13.	I have few friends at this school							
14.	Being financially well off is important to me							
15.	Helping others is important to me							
16.	Being better educated for my children is important							

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

Office of Educational
Research and Improvement (OERI)

ERIC

Date Filmed
March 28, 1997



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC

JC 960 615

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: AS worlds Collide - "Learning Communities in Rural Community Colleges"	
Author(s): Tom Isbell, Pat McClellan, STEVE G. ORNELAS	
Corporate Source: Central Arizona College 8470 North Overfield Rd Coolidge, AZ 85228	Publication Date: 5-26-96

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.



Check here
For Level 1 Release:
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY _____ Sample _____ TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 1

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2 documents



Check here
For Level 2 Release:
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but not in paper copy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY _____ Sample _____ TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
--

Level 2

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Sign
here→
please

Signature:

Steve Ornelas

Organization/Address:

Central Arizona College
8470 N. Overfield Rd
Coolidge, AZ 85228

Printed Name/Position/Title:

Tom Isbell - Professor Communications
Pat McClellan - Professor History

Telephone: (520)

426-4376

E-Mail Address:

FAX: (520)

426-4234

Date:

10-3-96

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:

Address:

Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:

Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

Rika Nakazawa
Acquisitions Coordinator
ERIC Clearinghouse for Community
Colleges
3051 Moore Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES



UCLA

BERKELEY • DAVIS • IRVINE • LOS ANGELES • RIVERSIDE • SAN DIEGO • SAN FRANCISCO

SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

ERIC • CLEARINGHOUSE FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES
3051 MOORE HALL
BOX 951521
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1521

July 10, 1996

Steve Ornelas, Prof
Soc/Behav Sci, Central Arizona Coll
8470 North Overfield Road
Coolidge, AZ 85228

Dear Dr. Ornelas,

The mission of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges is to collect information on community college education and research. Our database includes state-of-the-art studies, opinion papers, and conference presentations.

I have recently learned about your participation in the 18th Annual International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence sponsored by *The National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD)* held May 26-29, 1996. We at ERIC feel that your project or presentation, "*Learning Communities in Rural Community Colleges*," would make a valuable addition to our database. If available, please send two copies of the presentation and/or a report that the presentation was based on. We would also greatly appreciate copies of reports on any program/project taking place at your institution, as well as any other conference presentation. If accepted for inclusion in ERIC, your papers will be announced in Resources in Education and the on-line ERIC database and made available to ERIC users in paper and microfiche copies. Please return a completed copy of the enclosed release form with the submission.

Enclosed is a brief explanation of the ERIC system and a release form.

I thank you and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rika Nakazawa".

Rika Nakazawa
Acquisitions Coordinator

encl.